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The Cloning Conundrum

In Lee Silver’s “Jennifer and Rachel,” Silver explores a hypothetical situation in which human cloning is involved. Silver believes even there are many moral issues, cloning will one day be a reality and opponents of cloning will not be able to stop it.

Silver starts his essay with a hypothetical scenario involving Jennifer a fairly wealthy woman alone in the world. While not in a relationship currently, she has dabbled in romance on various occasions over the years. In mid-April Jennifer woke up with a feeling like she was missing something in her life - a child. To achieve this she turns to cloning. However, in the United States cloning is illegal, so to circumvent the law she takes a leave of absence from work to the Cayman Islands.

The cloning process costs $80,000 for the first part of the operation. If the pregnancy doesn’t take it costs an additional $20,000 for each additional pregnancy attempt. Soon after returning home and discovering she is pregnant she goes through the same routine any other woman would have when expecting a child. Nobody suspects when Rachel is born that she is a clone of Jennifer. Rachel while identical to Jennifer in every way will grow up as all other children in her age group.

Jennifer and Rachel are genetically the same person. Silver states that perhaps Rachel is actually her mother’s sister, and that her grandparents are actually her parents. He neither denies nor affirms these thoughts as these ideas will have to be rethought in society.

Dr. Callahan a director of a bioethics company would argue against this claim. Callahan believes laboratory creation of a being with a completely identical genetic makeup to a host would hinder the cloned individual’s exclusive self. He may also bring up that such exposure to her future self’s flaws and potential ailments would be devastating to her mental wellbeing as she grows up. However, Silver says lots of kids see a glimpse of their potential genetic short comings. This could also be a benefit since these potential issues can be fixed or treated early on.

Silver says Rachel will become her own person. Many opponents to cloning seem to disagree. Silver makes the point that Jennifer will likely raise Rachel differently in a completely different environment. Rachel will likely follow a much different path of life than her mother. Jennifer like any other mother will expect things of her child and in the end still love her the same way.

The Catholic hierarchy seems to think embryos are human and shouldn’t be altered. Silver points out that no embryos are altered and only unfertilized eggs are involved. Silver also points out that in the past similar religious groups have expressed concerns with in vitro fertilization. Silver believes it impossible to argue against religious beliefs with science and moves on.

Many of the opponents of cloning, such as William Safire think that on the whole cloning could harm the process of evolution. Silver claims that because cloning would be an extremely expensive service the amount of clones would be a small fraction of a percent of the world.

When Dolly the sheep was cloned, politicians turned against the idea of human cloning. Tom Harkin was the only Senator to accept the inevitable fact of human cloning. Silver feels no matter what human cloning will happen. If an individual wants to clone himself or herself she will find some place that it is legal to do so. The private market will control cloning. Wherever cloning is made illegal other places will allow it to profit off the taxes that such clinics would pay.

People have traditionally had the right to reproduce or not to reproduce in democratic societies. Human cloning changes this particular right. Today one does not have to have sex, or give sperm and eggs for reproduction. However, tomorrow could be different as cloning requires nothing more than one’s genetic code that could easily be taken without consent. Silver argues that a tech could easily sell an individual’s DNA to others. This is especially a concern with famous individuals. Silver states that though a cloned star might look the same they will likely not have the same ambitions. In Jennifer and Rachel’s situation there was consent.

The use of cloning would help infertile couples have a child of their own to raise. Cloning without consent would bring litigation. There will still be surreptitious cloning regardless of laws.

In the essay “Jennifer and Rachel,” Lee Silver maintains the belief that through all the good and bad, cloning will be inevitable. When one country bans it another will allow it. Silver proves his reasoning by countering the arguments brought up by opponents.

Work Cited

Silver, Lee M. “Jennifer and Rachel.” *Remaking Eden: Cloning and Beyond in a Brave New World* (1988): 117-25. Rpt. Iin *Writing in the Disciplines: A Reader and Rhetoric for Academic Writers,* 6th ed. Ed. Mary Lynch Kennedy and William J. Kennedy. Boston: Pearson 2009. 340-46. Print.